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Crime Stalking Elegant Areas Of Washington

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WASHINGTON.

Last week a Washington newspaper headlined a story: "No major crimes in city last night."

The story duly noted that during "the peak trouble hours from 6 p. m. to 2 a. m. there were no holdups, no yokings, no purse snatchings and no assaults."

Indeed, crime in the nation's capital has reached the point where the omission of a felony in one night is a rarity worthy of special notice.

It must be reported, however, that the day after the above headline appeared the situation returned to normal. "Gang assaults woman in park," a headline blared.

The victim, a 48-year-old wife of a State Department officer, was seized by four youths while walking her two poodles along a dirt road "lovers lane" in Montrose Park in fashionable Georgetown. Three of the youths raped her, while the fourth held the dogs.

The attack occurred at nine o'clock in the morning.

RAPED, ROBBED

Earlier that same morning, a 30-year-old CIA employee was raped by two young men who broke into her Georgetown apartment. The pair, after assaulting her, fled with several dollars taken from her purse.

Today in Washington crime is second to government business as a common concern of residents. Recent statistics show that Washington ranks near the top of the nation's crime-ridden cities.

Total criminal offenses per 100,000 inhabitants of metropolitan Washington is greater than that of New York, Detroit, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, or Cleveland.

Incidents of crime have

become so prevalent as to awaken the conscience of the community. Contributing to the mounting apprehension are several factors aside from the frequency of the crimes.

Many of the crimes have been committed in daylight. The victims have often been well-known persons. And frequently the offenses have occurred in relatively isolated upper-income residential areas, where intruders presumably are easy to spot.

SHOT TO DEATH

Last fall, Mrs. Mary Pinchot Meyer, 43-year-old artist friend of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy and member of the Pennsylvania Pinchots, was shot to death as she was taking a walk along the C & O Canal towpath, a favorite route of hikers. A Negro laborer who was fishing nearby has been charged with the murder.

In January, Mrs. Gwen Cafritz, Washington's famed social hostess, was robbed at knife-point of jewels valued at \$400,000.

Mrs. Cafritz lives in the elegant Foxhall Road area, a quiet neighborhood of large homes, manicured lawns and tree-shaded slopes. Gov. Rockefeller has a home there, as does U. S. Ambassador to Spain Angier Biddle Duke and Duncan Phillips, president of the Phillips Art Gallery.

A rash of robberies, including those at the homes of Sen. Lister Hill, of Alabama, and Najeeb Halaby, former director of the Federal Aviation Administration prompted residents to establish an organization of "crime wardens." They serve as sentries, somewhat in the manner of Brooklyn's civilian anti-crime patrol, the Maccabees, although not nearly as highly mechanized or organized.

Not long ago burglars broke into the residence of Talat-al-Ghoussein, the Kuwait Ambassador, woke up the envoy and his wife and proceeded to rob the couple of gems and other valuables.

The Ambassador later protested that a country as rich as the U. S. should be able to afford police protection for each of the foreign embassies in Washington.

A diplomatic gaff was narrowly avoided when District Police Chief John Layton politely, but firmly, reported that Washington's 100 foreign embassies could be assured of police protection. But, he added, it would be impractical to assign an individual policeman at each embassy.

Taking the lead in the capital's war on crime is President Johnson. Mr. Johnson, the de facto mayor of the District of Columbia, last week appointed members to the new D. C. crime commission headed by Herbert Miller Jr., a Washington lawyer who recently resigned as Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

MORE POLICE

At the same time the President signed a \$360 million appropriation bill for the District, which includes a provision allowing for the addition of 250 policemen to the present 3,000-man force.

"I believe Americans want Washington, D.C., to be an example of a clean and safe city where law is respected, where order prevails and where every citizen is safe in his home or on the streets," the President declared.

Washington, he said, "should be a model city—as well as the capital city—of our nation."

He further maintained,

"our nation's capital must be a safe showplace for visitors. And our efforts toward this goal must begin now—without delay."

To combat crime in the streets the police launched what is called an "operational tactical force." Under the plan a mobile unit of 200 officers is assigned in force to areas where it is feared trouble is brewing. The police work on their off days and thus earn extra pay.

A similar plan was instituted about five years ago by then-New York Police Commissioner Michael Murphy. The operation proved effective in reducing crime in neighborhoods where the rate was high.

WELCOMED

There were a few complaints that the extra patrols were over zealous in cracking down on minor offenders such as noise-makers. But in the main they were welcomed as an added shield of protection by the ordinary citizen.

"I'm glad they're here," commented a resident in the Negro area. "You take out a \$10 bill and some of those jitterbugs see you and you don't get halfway down the block before you're jumped."

Chief Layton, like his predecessor, Chief Robert Murray, contends that a necessary step for improving law enforcement in the district is a revision of the Mallory rule.

The Supreme Court ruled in what has become known as the Mallory decision that a confession may not be introduced as evidence in court if it was obtained during an unnecessary delay between arrest and arraignment.

Chief Layton insists that the rule hampers law enforcement by interfering with the normal and accepted techniques of collecting evidence and, as a case in point, even prevents the police from questioning a suspect picked up in connection with one robbery about other unsolved robberies.